Tackling swine flu

520. SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there are apprehension that H1N1 or Swine Flu may turn into epidemic during the winter season; and

(b) if so, what preventive measures Government proposes to take to contain the disease and provide prompt treatment to the affected persons throughout the country?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD): (a) Yes.

There are apprehensions that the number of cases of Pandemic Influenza may surge in winter season. This is based on the available data that Pandemic recurs in waves and that the wave pattern is more distinct in geographical areas which experience a winter peak of seasonal flu as observed in northern part of the Country.

(b) A comprehensive plan including guidelines and standard operating procedures were put in place. Officers of the rank of Additional Secretaries and Joint Secretaries have visited and assessed the preparedness and response.

Community surveillance to detect clusters of influenza like illness is being done through Integrated Disease Surveillance Project. Laboratory network has been strengthened. There are forty one laboratories (23 in Govt. Sector and 18 in Private Sector) testing the clinical samples. The laboratories are keeping track of any mutation in the virus to a more virulent form.

Government of India procured 40 million capsules and 4 lakh bottles of Oseltamivir, the drug to treat H1N1 Flu. 18 million have been given to the States/UTs. Restricted sale of Oseltamivir is allowed through retail outlets having license to sell Schedule X drug. Adequate stock of personal protective equipments has been kept. Three Indian manufacturers of Vaccine are being supported to manufacture H1N1 vaccine. Four million doses are being imported to vaccinate the high risk group. Training of district level teams is supported by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. IMA has been provided funds to train private practitioners.

All States have been requested to gear up the State machinery, open large number of screening centres and strengthen isolation facilities including critical care facilities at district level.

A task force in the I&B Ministry is implementing the media plan. Do's and don'ts and other pertinent information would continue to be published in print media and shown in visual media to create awareness among public. Information is also available on the website: http://mohfw-h1n1.nic.in Government of India is monitoring the situation on daily basis.